



POSTGAME NOTES AND QUOTES

TENNESSEE TITANS VS. NEW ORLEANS SAINTS SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 10, 2023 • CAESARS SUPERDOME GAME NOTES

- With the Saints starting 1-0, they will go on the road next week to face the Carolina Panthers on Monday Night Football at Bank of America Stadium. Kickoff is scheduled for 6:15 p.m. CT and the game will be nationally televised on ESPN (WDSU 6 locally)
- The Saints improved to 22-35 in season openers and continued their club-record winning streak of season openers to five straight. The five straight season-opening wins are the longest streak of opening wins in the NFL.
- Head Coach **Dennis Allen** is the first coach in the franchise's history to win his first two seasons openers in charge of the club
- New Orleans' record against the Titans/Oilers franchise improved to 7-9-1
- This was the Saints' first win against Titans/Oilers in the Superdome since a season-opening 33-21 victory over the Oilers at the Superdome on September 5, 1993.
- After holding the Titans to 15 points in the season opener, it matched the longest streak in franchise history (9/8/-11/10/91) of nine consecutive games holding an opponent to 20 points or less, dating back to November 13, 2022. It was the second time in three season openers that New Orleans kept their opponent out of the end zone, with the Saints defeating the Green Bay Packers 38-3 on September 12, 2021. New Orleans held Tennessee to field goals on all three of their red zone attempts.
- New Orleans outgained the Titans 351-285 today and won the turnover battle 3-2, recording three interceptions.
- While the Saints converted seven-of-16 (43.8 percent) third down attempts, New Orleans allowed the Titans to convert only two-of-12 (16.7 percent).
- With eight combined field goals by both teams (three for New Orleans, five for Tennessee), it marked the most combined field goals in a Week One contest in the NFL.
- In making his Saints debut today as starting quarterback, **Derek Carr** started his 143rd career regular season contest, surpassing the retired Tom Brady for the most starts by a signal-caller since 2014, when Carr entered the league.
- Carr is the 37th player to start a contest at the position for New Orleans and the 12th to win his first start with the club.
- Carr completed 23-of-33 passes (69.7 percent) for 305 yards. His 305 yards brought him to 35,527 career passing yards, ranked 31st in NFL record books, surpassing Jim Kelly.
- His 23 completions brought his career total to 3,224, ranked 26th in NFL record books, surpassing Matt Hasselbeck.

- Carr had a completion of 45 yards to WR **Chris Olave** and a 41-yard completion to WR/RS **Rashid Shaheed**. His 83 completions of 40-yards or more since coming into the NFL in 2014 rank sixth in the NFL.
- Carr improved his record against the Titans to 4-2 and his season opener record to 6-4
- Olave finished with a team-leading eight receptions for 112 yards, marking his fourth 100-yard receiving game of his career.
- WR **Michael Thomas** finished with five receptions for 61 yards.
- Shaheed recorded a career-high five receptions for 89 yards (17.8 avg.) and one 19-yard touchdown, carried twice for 11 yards, returned five kickoffs for 110 yards and two punts for six yards. He finished with 100 total yards from scrimmage and a career-high 216 all-purpose yards, the highest total by a Saint since RB Alvin Kamara's 283 in the 2017 regular season finale at Tampa Bay.
- S **Tyrann Mathieu** finished with five (three solo) tackles to surpass the 700th mark on his career (702)
- Three Saints had an interception, the first time New Orleans had finished with three picks in a contest since September 26, 2021 at New England.
- CB **Marshon Lattimore** had one pick to give him 15 on his career and move him into a tie with Ernie Jackson, Brett Maxie and Marcus Williams for eighth in club record books for career interceptions. Overall, he finished with the second quarter pick, two solo tackles and four passes defended.
- CB **Paulson Adebo** finished with two tackles and one interception to set up the Saints first touchdown of the season
- S **Marcus Maye** finished with six tackles and one interception, his first pick as a Saint and his first since 2020 as a member of the New York Jets.
- LB **Demario Davis** led the team with 10 tackles (9 solo).
- LB **Pete Werner** finished with eight tackles and a split sack.
- DE **Cameron Jordan**, posted five tackles (two solo), a split sack and two passes defended.
- DE **Carl Granderson** finished with four tackles (two solo), a team-high 1.5 sacks and four quarterback hits.
- Rookie DT **Bryan Bresee**, the team's first round pick, made his NFL debut and had a split sack near the end of the first half.
- LB **D'Marco Jackson** led the team with two special teams tackles.
- Early in the second quarter, LB **Zack Baun** got his hands on a punt that was scored as a punt for one yard, after it deflected out of bounds one yard past the line of scrimmage.
- K **Blake Grupe** drilled three-of-three field goals, including a 52-yarder and one PAT attempt. All five of Grupe's kickoffs sailed into the end zone for touchbacks. Grupe's became the first Saints rookie kicker to drill three field goals in his NFL debut.



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(Opening Statement): “Obviously, it’s a hell of a win for us. I thought our guys showed a lot of fortitude in just hanging in there to keep battling. It’s a really good football team that we just played. They have been, perennially, one of the teams in the AFC that you talk about all the way until the end. I think they’re well coached. I really thought it was a heck of a game, and I was proud of our guys for being able to hang in there and make just enough plays to win it.”

(On the three turnovers): “The guys made some plays. I thought the blocked punt (note scored as one-yard punt by the NFL because it landed out of bounds one yard past the line of scrimmage) gave us a little bit of energy early in the game. Then, I think our guys had opportunities to make plays on the ball, and they finished and capitalized on it. That’s probably something we didn’t execute as much in the previous season, but our guys made some plays when they needed to. It was good to see. Defensively, I thought it was pretty good.”

(On Marshon Lattimore coming out of the game at a certain point) “It wasn’t injury. I’m not sure exactly what it was in terms of why he came out. I think part of it was he got gassed a little bit, which is kind of to be expected. We played a lot of down safety. We played a lot of man to man. He was having to cover receivers every single down. I think he played a hell of a game. I thought our secondary made some plays on the ball. I thought the Titans, everything they got they had to earn. I thought we did a good job up front being able to get a little pressure on the quarterback.”

(On the fourth quarter execution) “The best teams are able to finish in this League. We were able to get into a competitive game in the fourth quarter and make enough plays to win the game. I’m proud of the team for being able to do that.”

(On the dime working defensively against the Titans): “I think it’s a combination of rush and coverage. I thought our guys did a good job of executing the pass rush patterns we had up front. We did a good job of being tight in coverage and not giving them easy completions for the most part. I think that’s the key to good pass defense. You need to have both elements involved there. I thought both elements were there in the game today.”

(On if he wanted the defense to close out the Titans’ last possession): “I wanted to win the game. At that point, the ball’s not in my court, but I was comfortable with whatever outcome we had because I had confidence our offense could run the clock out. That’s exactly what we did.”

(On the Saints’ run game): “I thought we weren’t able to run the ball very effectively at all today. Obviously, that’s a good front we played today. They led the league in terms of run defense last year. We knew it was going to be difficult to run the ball. I thought that made it a little more difficult, in terms of protecting the quarterback, early in the game. I thought we did a much better job as the game wore on of being able to get a little more protection for Derek (Carr). We started to be able to hit a few plays down the field. That’s something we’ve got to improve on. We’re excited about the fact that we won the game against a really good team, yet we know there’s a ton of stuff we have to clean up. There’s a lot of things we have to get better at and a short time to do it. We’re going to enjoy this win, but we’re going to turn our focus to Carolina and get ready for a divisional opponent.”

(On if they made any adjustments in the pass protection): “We made a few adjustments, got a couple of chips over there, particularly to Trevor (Penning), to help him out over there. That’s pretty common in our league. You go in with a plan, you have a few things and you see how things are working. Then, you have to make some adjustments. I thought our offense did a nice job of making a couple of adjustments to get some opportunities to make some plays.”

(On Trevor Penning’s play) “No, I am not concerned. This guy’s going to be a good player. You have a young guy that’s playing against an extremely good front. Does he have to get better? Absolutely. Am I concerned? No. I think we just keep our heads down, keep going to work. We will keep getting better. We will make our evaluations when we get to the end of the season and see where we are at. I think this kid’s going to be just fine.”

(On using the Titans’ strengths to strengthen the Saints’ play) “Our guys have been competing for the last month and a half or so. I thought we had a great camp. I thought our guys worked extremely hard. I thought they were focused on what we had to do in the game. I did think we were a little out of sorts early in the game. We had to kind of calm down a little bit. Once we kind of settled in, we did alright. After the opening kickoff and turning the ball over like we did and have the defense go out

there and force a field goal in that situation against a team who's been a really good red zone offense, I thought that was huge for our confidence for our team."

(On Derek Carr's performance): "I thought there was a lot of good things that I saw. I'm sure there's a few things that we need to look at, maybe get fixed. I think early on in the game, like you said, I don't know we did as good a job as we needed to, in terms of getting protection for (Derek Carr). Once we kind of settled that in a little more, I thought you saw in the second half a little bit more effectiveness in the passing game. We felt like there might be some opportunities downfield. The big pass play there to Rashid (Shaheed) there in the end, obviously the big touchdown pass, those were big plays in the game."

(On Rashid Shaheed's ability to handle the emotional highs and lows of the game): "I think overall (Rashid Shaheed) did well. You have to remember here's another young guy that doesn't have a ton of experience and missed a ton of camp. Look, that's the first time he had ever been tackled since last season. Those are all lessons that you learn. They're much easier lessons to learn off of a win."

(On Blake Grupe's performance): "I thought (Blake) kicked the ball well. The 52-yarder there was a huge kick in the game. That was great to see the kid knock that thing through. I thought he kicked the ball off well. I was pleased with the way he performed."

(On the offensive answer to the Titans throughout the game) "It was big. I think the big difference in the game is obviously the turnover-takeaway ratio. That was one thing that was a big factor in the game. I include the blocked punt in there. If you said that, there were four takeaways in the game, four plays that changed the field position and the momentum of the game. I thought that was huge. With the exception of the kneel-down play in the end, we were 1-of-3 in the red zone. They were 0-for-3 in the red zone in terms of scoring touchdowns. I thought that was a big factor."

(On Carl Granderson): "Carl (Granderson)'s been a guy that's worked extremely hard, and he's just continued to get better and better and better. That's a testament to the way that it works. The guy comes in and he doesn't say a whole lot. He just comes in and does his work, does his job and keeps getting better. He's a guy with talent that's willing to work. I feel like we can help him be a better football player, and he's kind of making his way into that."

(On the pump-and-go) "It was something we felt like we might have an opportunity against them [the Titans]. I thought Pete (Carmichael) called it right at the right time. I thought (Rashid) Shaheed - I don't know if it was the greatest route in the world - he just ran by him. Derek (Carr) put it in a good spot. It was awesome."

(On his trust in Derek Carr, specifically with two minutes left in the game) "I've been saying it. I have confidence in our offense. When it's time to go make the play, we're going to call the plays and make the plays we need to make to win games. I feel confident in our ability to do that."

(On the crowd's impact on the game): "The crowd was awesome. I've said this, I've told Demario (Davis) this. This crowd is the best crowd in football, particularly when we're playing well on defense. That's really our responsibility defensively to keep the crowd in the game. I think they were a big part particularly early in the game."

(On Rashid Shaheed's growth): "(Rashid Shaheed)'s much further along than where he was last year, yet there's so much more growth available for that kid. I just see a ton of potential in him. I don't think he's anywhere near where he can be. I'm excited about continuing to watch him grow as the season goes on."

(On Shaheed's knowledge to let the clock wind down) "Look, a couple of things - I thought there was excellent communication going on from Pete (Carmichael) to Derek (Carr) and Derek to the guys in the huddle. We all knew exactly what we needed to do on each one of those plays. We all knew the importance of staying in bounds. Obviously, he executed the play just like we would've liked him to."

(On the defense containing Derrick Henry): "Overall, I thought we did a hell of a job. One screen play got out on us. That would be probably one play I'd like to have back. Other than that, overall, I thought, we did a pretty good job of minimizing what they were able to do offensively."



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(On if this game slipped away) “Well, I don’t know about that. We’ve got to play a lot better. We have to come up with some more plays on third down, defensively. We have to match another defense that is excellent. We didn’t win the kicking game; and, certainly didn’t do good in the red zone offensively. Then, when we needed to get a stop, we were counting on our defense. They played well all day. We had the hiccup down there in the red zone where (on) third down, they (the Saints) scored a touchdown. We will have to play better, and we will. And, we will coach better. I don’t think we gave one away. We just (had) too many mistakes.”

(On his assessment of the quarterback play) “Well, coaching and quarterback play, line play, defensive play, everybody (has to do better). It’s just never going to be about one guy. I told them at halftime. We have to block better. We have to get into our routes better. We have to get open quicker. And we have to throw the ball better. The runners have to run better. That is what it is always going to be. Everybody is tied in. Week One, we found some adversity. It’s a great challenge on the road. When we handled the environment, we were able to hit some plays. Unfortunately, it got behind the sticks with too many long situations, too many third and longs, which led to not enough conversions.”

(On the defensive play) “Not good enough. Not good enough. (We) gave up a touchdown, just like I said, on third down. If we want to be a great defense, you have to be a great defense all of the time. We tried to put the game in their hands (the defense). I thought that we would get a stop. They (the Saints) had 49 rushing yards when we made the decision to kick. I thought that we would get a stop. I thought that we would find a way to get it inside the 40 and kick a field goal to win the game. That’s what I believed.”

(On Ryan Tannehill’s decision making today) “We just have to be more decisive in all three phases and figure out what allows our players to play decisive and play better, especially in an environment like this Ryan will be better. We will coach better. We will get open quicker. And, we will block a little longer than we did today going forward, because that’s what we have to do.”

(On if it was a momentum switch when not converting on the flea flicker) “We hit some plays and we don’t hit some plays. We didn’t hit it. Our job is to, as a team, as a coaching staff, as players, is to go try to make a play and get back to center (whether it’s a) positive play (or a) negative play so that those things don’t add up. I don’t know if that was a momentum switch, but, certainly, it’s a play that we have to hit and would’ve liked to have hit.”

(On if the officials blowing the Titans’ fumble recovery dead was a momentum-changer) “Whatever it is, they’re going to let it play out. Next week, that’s going to be a fumble. Then the next week it’s going to be an incomplete pass, then the next week it’s going to be a fumble. So, if you’re asking me that we should let replay sort it (out), I would tell you that we should let replay sort it out. You can go back and show the team a lot of things that we covered came up today. (We were) trying to recover the ball. I was proud of the way Kevin (Byard) didn’t flinch and went and got the ball, and the way that tried to affect the quarterback. It just did not go our way. They called (the dropped ball) incomplete. Once it goes to replay, they need obvious evidence that it wasn’t a pass.”

(On what constitutes a throw in that situation) “I could sit here and debate it. What needs to happen is that we all understand that the call on the field is critical. After that, you need clear and obvious evidence to overrule the call on the field. It was a good play there by the defense, but (we) didn’t get there quick enough. Again, that wasn’t the reason that we lost today,”

(On how banged up was Kristian Fulton and why he went back into the game) “He and the trainers said that he could go back in. You’ve got 48 guys on gameday. Two of them are quarterbacks. Three of them are specialists. When professional athletes tell us that they can go back in, whether it’s Jeff Simmons), Kristian, on and on and on, they get checked out and if they can come back and play, then we put them back in.”

(On if there was a reason why the team didn’t run Derrick Henry more in the second half) “He tried to run a few, and we weren’t overly successful. (We were) getting into some longer yardage situations and had some called that gave us a look that we had to check out of. Derrick is going to help us, and we’ve got to find ways to keep running the football, be a little better when we throw it, and find a way to get him a screen today like we did.”

(On if the passing game was not in a rhythm because it's the season opener) "We could find a million excuses. All that excuses are going to do is make you feel better today. What we need to do is have accountability and some discipline as we move forward to make today hard, but, hopefully, tomorrow a little easier down the stretch as we move forward."

(On how he evaluates the offensive line moving forward) "The same way I evaluate every position. We didn't coach better than the Saints. We didn't play better in the critical situations. Every position group, every player is going to have some good plays and some bad plays. We've got to eliminate the ones that's going to get us beat."

(On the mistake on the blocked punt-note scored as a one-yard punt because it went out of bounds past the line of scrimmage) "Missed a block. Missed a guy on the up and under, the inside out."

(On what he likes about Tyjae Spears) "I love who he is as a person. I love his attitude. I love the fact that he's given himself to this team. I love seeing him every day. I knew that he was talented. He will help us win."

(On what did the Saints defense do to prevent the Titans from converting in the red zone) "We just didn't really get into the drives. Once we hit into the red zone, we kind of stalled out there, kind of out at the high red. We never got really inside the ten to where we could feel good about scoring touchdowns."



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WIDE RECEIVER/RETURN SPECIALIST RASHID SHAHEED

That big third down connection there at the end, what was the mindset going into that play and what did you see? “Yeah, so it was funny. Derek (Carr) before the possession started, he came right up to me. And he was like, just run as fast as you can and I'm going to throw it. I knew going out there that he was going to give me an opportunity, and I was able to create some separation through a great ball and I was able to get two feet in and maintain that drive and maintain that win.

On the touchdown, how much have you guys been sitting on that one and sort of waiting for the right opportunity? “I felt like we were waiting for forever. I kind of had it in the back of my mind. I knew that the play was going to be called, it was just a matter of when and I knew that I had to execute and the play was perfectly executed. Derek saw me open and he delivered a great ball and all I had to do was catch it.”

It looked like you kind of stutter stepped a little bit in front of the guy and sort of caught him flat footed. Is that what you saw? “Yeah, that was the plan once I saw him flat footed. No, I knew that I could just burst by him and score a touchdown.”

Speak to the difference in how you felt pre-game beginning of last year to the pre-game of this year as well as the confidence level. “Yeah, no, I was so confident. I was just out there having fun, just enjoying the moment, not getting too caught up in any of the stuff, just going out and playing football. I felt completely different, I wasn't in my mind. I wasn't thinking, I just knew that I was prepared and I was going to come out and play the best game that I can.”

Was the game a little slower? “It was 100%.”

How do you analyze your work on film? “Yeah, like I just said, the game is slowing down a lot. I've been taking more time in the film room and spending more time just focusing on the little things and I knew that, going into the season, that will take me to the next level. There's still a lot of work to do, but I'm definitely proud of how far I came.”

How do you feel emotionally, from the opening kickoff to the touchdown to one of the clutch plays in the game? “Yeah, emotions were everywhere. It was a hard fought game and (there is) a lot of stuff that we have to clean up, but we got the win, that's all that matters and the emotions are high right now. We are going to enjoy this for the time being, but we know that we got to get back to work next week. Got a tough opponent. The emotions were kind of up and down. My teammates kind of kept my head high after the turnover on the first play, and I knew I was going to receive more opportunities, so I just had to make the most of them.”

Did that take a minute to get past that? Like, what is your process to get past that? “You kind of just got to just shove it in the dirt, move on to the next play. I knew that I was going to get more opportunities in the back of my head and I knew that there's plenty more game to play. So that's kind of what I was thinking.”

On the kickoffs, do you kind of have that opportunity to kind of make that decision the ball's in the air about whether you want to take it out? “Yeah, absolutely Riz (Darren Rizzi) gives me full go on that, whether to take it out or keep it. He believes in me and he believes in my decisions.”

LINEBACKER DEMARIO DAVIS

Opening Statement: “Oh man, I got a lot to say. So, buckle up. I started to realize something. Man, we played his game on Sundays. And it's really the Lord's day. And when the day we should be worshiping the Lord, a lot of times players are getting worship, and we get to go on his ballfield. So, since so many of us didn't get to go to church today, I have a word that I want to share. It's a little untraditional so like I said, buckle up.

Revelations 3:20 says, “See I stand at the door and knock, if anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in and dine with him and eat with him and He with me.”

I want to tell you all about a knock that I heard this week.

“A lot of people don't know this, but on Friday, my daughter, she's four years old, had her third epilepsy seizure attack. This is my same daughter who survived retinoblastoma. She's been totally cleared from that, but she had her third seizure. And it's been almost two years. She was about a month away if she would have had no seizures for one more month then she would have been off of the medicine, but now we have to start that clock all the way over. It was on Friday when there was a bunch of kids over at the house and she was playing and I noticed something was off. I told her momma I thought she was having a seizure and her mom is pretty good. She saw it, my wife, and we took her in the room, didn't want to cause a scene, and she started to foam at the mouth. It was her worst seizure. For 30 minutes She seized and we had to call the paramedics and they came. So, over a course of time, in a total of 30 minutes, they got her in. My wife got into the (medical vehicle) paramedics with her, and I got behind them driving. You can imagine all the thoughts that are racing through your mind as the last sight you see of your daughter is she's totally out of it. Got to the hospital and my wife told me that my daughter stopped breathing in the car twice, so I am of course praying. We get to the hospital. They give her a bunch of medicine so that the seizure stops. She's laying there. And at this point if she seize for 30 minutes you start to fear there could be development issues that could mess with the brain. She stopped breathing, there was no oxygen going into her brain. You know you're starting to think about her speech could be slurred or anything or worse. So we prayed and we prayed and she had medicine and my wife and I had to stay overnight at the hospital. And in the middle of the night, probably about 3:00, I heard a knock. The knock was my daughter. I pray for her. I said, “God, let this just be an attack from the enemy.” They are just trying to be a distraction and let him have overplayed his hand and my daughter come back stronger than before. When I heard my daughter talk in the middle of the night, and my daughter she doesn't have any developed development issues, Praise God. She doesn't have any slurred speech prior to this. She woke up talking clear that she was talking before and anyone who has dealt with epilepsy knows that it takes a few days for them to come back. You know usually they can get back to normal wherever they were, but it takes a couple of days. They're groggy, it's a lot, because what their body's like is like the TV, just static in your brain. She was talking clearer than before and it was three o'clock when we heard her talk and we let her talk for about 20 minutes we said, “Hey baby, it's nighttime. Let's go back to sleep.” I just started saying praise God, praise God. The next morning, when she got up, my daughter was so sharp. She was able to talk to me (and) her mom, I mean clear conversation. She's sharp for a four year old, no stuttering, all her words clear. And my daughter, like I said my daughter was already sharp, she was sharper than before. And if any of you were able to have a conversation with my daughter, you wouldn't know anything had ever happened. We had a birthday party for my seven year old daughter that day, and she got to be released from the hospital. She came back home and it was as if nothing was happening. She was playing with the kids the day before, she had the worst seizure that she had ever had, and the next day she's back out there playing with the kids. Now of course we can't let her get overstimulated. We have to keep bringing her in, had to keep cooling her down. Can't let her do too much just because of protocol. But when I tell you I got a chance to hear a knock from God. And what I want to share is, we get to play this game and it's great. There's so many amazing things that have happened in that game, and everybody wants to hear about them, but when we leave this game, we go back to being regular people. Regular people are living life, and people are waiting for a knock. And the word says, who Jesus is, he's knocking at the door. All you got to do is get up. So on the way, man, I'm nervous, but I'm praying and I'm trusting and I'm believing and I'm asking for my daughter to make it through. I'm not asking that she's better than before. God gave me just what I asked for plus some. I was blown away. And at that point, I knew what the game was already. The game was gonna take care of itself. My knock had already been answered. And I just want people to know, like if you got stuff going on in your life, lay it

before the Lord. Lay it before the Lord and trust and be expecting to have a knock. The word says what you have to do is, you have to get up and open the door. He's not going to open the door for you. He's going to knock, but you have to be listening and waiting for the knock and when you see it, you have to get up and open the door and your blessing is going to be there. I'll be here to talk about football next week. I wish y'all well, Happy Sunday, and Praise God."

Thank you

QUARTERBACK DEREK CARR

Q: Your thoughts on the first game? "It was a lot of fun. We won and that's all I wanted to do, and that was one of the more physical games I've played in my 10 years, very physical football game up in the trenches. But proud of our guys where we bounced back in the second half, and we're able to get that win."

Q: On that last drive do you want that shot to go to Rashid to try to put the game away? "Yeah. Well, me and Pete (Carmichael) talked about on the sideline, and I told Pete that was a play that I liked and he trusted, Shid (Rashid Shaheed) and I to make the play, and the offensive line gave me time to throw it. And when he's that fast, I just was just trying to throw it out of bounds and he ran a great route, caught it. It's exciting, but that goes back to Pete's trust on us. He asked me what I liked throughout the game. Before that drive, that was something that I really liked and he called it. So, he has a lot of trust in us as players and that means a lot as a player."

Q: What did you see on the touchdown throw to Shaheed? "Great route by Shid, ran a double move, came over, motion, double move. I tried to give a little pump fake when he was settling his feet to try and get the corner to stop, and Shid is so fast that it is really tough on a corner to get back started when he gets going. Shid ran a great route. Again, that's another play that Pete had called up, dialed up. I really, really enjoyed working with him and his demeanor throughout the game because you kind of know what's coming and you know what to expect. He calls them and he counts on us to make plays for him."

Q: What does it say about Shaheed to be able to bounce back from opening kickoff and be available to help make those plays to get you guys a touchdown? "Well, it's very veteran thing of him to do. It is a very, very grown up thing. Usually when young guys make a mistake early, it's hard to get them back focused. It is hard to get them back right for the rest of the game. That is just the NFL. It is just overtime, you see that. He made that play and no one blinked, no one flinched. But I was really proud of him. When something like that happens, his mindset, his demeanor was great. So, when something like that happens like man, I hope he gets to make some plays after to get that confidence back. But from what it looked like to me, he didn't lose any because he came out and caught a lot of passes for us in some big situations."

Q: What does this mean for the offense as your first live game of meaningful action? "The exciting part was that everyone wanted to talk about the weapons and throwing the ball down the field, all that kind of stuff that things we've been doing in camp, but this we showed that we could win the ultimate physical type of game, right? Yeah, we showed that we can win a physical football game, and we're going to have to be able to win in any kind of different way. I'm just glad that we hopefully got that one out of the way."

Q: How proud are you to be able to execute the drive to run out the clock and seal the deal? Well, it felt really good, obviously. You can tell I wear my emotions on my sleeve sometimes, so I was really excited, fired up. The one that got me the most excited was the run that creased at the end, because that is the one that did it. The O-Line called it right, they blocked it right, and Jamaal (Williams) made the right cut and got down. He did exactly what coach asked, get the first and get down. That right there is what makes me proud because it's the game on the line. We get this, we win, and we didn't have to put the defense back out there. That makes me happy."

Q: Talk about your connection with Chris Olave as well as Michael Thomas? "Yeah, I think today was awesome because the ball spread around so much. Chris obviously went over 100 and that's fantasy people's favorite thing ever. When we can spread it out, no matter who gets the 100, no matter who gets the touchdown. As long as we keep that mindset of big team little me. Hopefully we will see a lot of good days for Chris and Shid and Mike and Juwan (Johnson) and everybody. Everybody made

their plays when they were called upon, that is good to see for a quarterback because now I can trust them all. Now if they're doubling hammer, they're playing robber, I can go to this guy and I can trust him to win. It helps me with my decision making for sure.

Q: Can you explain what you saw on that last drive to win the game? "Yeah, that's all Pete Carmichael, just trust in us as players. It's a play that we talked all game and before that drive was a play that him and I had talked about, and I was like Pete I love this. What was awesome about that is that this is our first game really playing together with all the situations, all the scenarios, game on the line and he trusted us to make a play. As a player, that means so much to us that he would trust us in that situation and go get that for him and for the team. Hopefully we can continue to do that because he showed us that he trusts us, so we got to keep proving to him every week that we can earn that."

So, it was designed to go to Shid on that play? "Yeah, if they gave it to us. If we had the one on one and a good release, but if not, we had something else. We were trying to get it to Shid."

Q: So, you guys had been sitting on that double move, the one that turned into the touchdown? What was sort of the origin of that, like did you guys talk about that last night or something? Or in the last few days, when did you identify that and know that was something you wanted to go to? "Well, we saw something in practice a couple weeks ago. We thought it would be kind of cool if we did this and sure enough, as you watch the tape, it looks kind of good in this situation to call it. We ran it at practice and we actually didn't connect on it in practice funny enough, but today we connected and those are the ones that matter."

Q: What about the defense, just the way how they played and what that does for you as a Quarterback? "If they don't play that well and we lose the game, everybody's mad at me, and rightfully so. That's how it should be as a quarterback. This is the ultimate team game. It takes all 11 on the field at once, all three phases. All three phases had some plays that they'd like back, but all three phases played their butt off and played physical and grinded and did everything they could to win. Yes, I'm so proud of our defense. Yes, I'm so thankful with the takeaways that they got and kind of washed ours away and helped us in that. They would say they expect us to finish the game just like we expect them to get us the ball back. As long as we keep that expectation for each other, knowing that, hey, if it doesn't happen, we got your back, we'll take care of it. Keep that kind of mindset. I think we're going to have a good season."

Q: Talk about how physical it was during the game. Tell us a little bit about your ability to maybe sit in that pocket a little bit longer in the second half and make some of those throws? "Well, that's all the offensive line. I try my best to not be a statue back there to let my guys get open and let them run and when I have to get out, try and go get as many yards as I can and or make a play with throwing it. But they did a great job in the second half. This is without watching the film too. In the second half it just felt better, the timing of things, whatever. However it worked out, it was just better and very proud of those guys. I think everybody offense, defense, or everybody felt a little rusty that it's week one and you hate to say that but it always happens. We cleaned it up really fast and we're able to bounce back to get the win."

Q: You have been waiting for this game for a long time. How did it feel emotionally to finally get that first touchdown after grinding it out? "Yeah, it felt great. But again, in that situation that was the expectation. We got to score, we have to get a touchdown to win this game, and thankfully we did. I just try my best until the game's over to stay here. I guess I get emotional after that touchdown. It's like so far in my head. I'm like, oh, cool, first touchdown. And then like, literally half a second later it's out. It's like okay, now what do I have to do next. The best part about it is that we win the game. We won the game. That's literally the only reason I came here and wanted to play this game so bad was to win. This game, so that we can hopefully continue to keep stacking them."

Q: What was your view of Mike from today? "I love Mike, the ultimate competitor. On gameday, I love the communication that we have. It's a different level man. He reminds me so much of Devante (Adams), the way that they both approach the game and it makes sense because they're two of the best receivers in the whole league. His mentality, his violent route running. You saw the one he caught over the middle on second down to get us back into a third and manageable and took a shot. He told me, he's like if you have to throw it in there, throw in there and he let me throw it in there. He took the hit and he bounced up. Just that mentality that he brings elevates everybody on offense. It means man I got to do that for us too, I have to match that. And I'm just so proud of him. I know it's

been a long road for Mike, now (to) be able to start the game off big down the sideline, I know how much that meant to him. But knowing Mike he couldn't care less. He cares about the next rep. I think that's what we've all fallen in love with Mike (for0 and I'm the same. I haven't been around him as much as y'all but it didn't take long for me to see what he was about."

Q: What makes Mike's communication a little bit different or something that stands out that he does?
"He sees things that a quarterback sees. He sees things from certain reps and certain routes. Like he was like a third in the progression on that one, but now I know if these are shut out, I know he's going to do it. Right when we see that, so it just helps you so much. You get to him quicker. You know even on that third down, I almost gave him a hand signal just because I saw something. There was one earlier in the game where I gave him a hand signal. He ran it perfect. We were about to hit it when they hit the ball. I wish we had that play for Mike, but I don't know, he just sees things the way I want him as a quarterback to and it's really impressive.

Q: What happened on that interception? "I was dumb. I was way too excited just to be honest with you. I know it's funny right now because we won, but it wasn't funny at the moment. I took it very seriously, but that was just about me being stupid."



POSTGAME NOTES AND QUOTES

TENNESSEE TITANS VS. NEW ORLEANS SAINTS SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 10, 2023 • CAESARS SUPERDOME TENNESSEE TITANS PLAYER QUOTES

QUARTERBACK RYAN TANNEHILL

(on the mistakes) "It is a sick feeling in your gut. We did not go out and play the way that we wanted to play. We weren't good enough in the red zone. We had missed opportunities. There were a couple of bright spots, but as a whole we have to be better in a lot of different areas."

(on if he can walk through the interceptions) "It doesn't really matter. You can walk through. It doesn't matter what happened. They were turnovers. We have to eliminate those to give us a chance to win the game."

(on if the timing was off) "It was definitely a factor. Things play out a little differently in practices then they do in the game. We just have to do a better job of being consistent as we can. We have those reps in practice and we need to make sure when we carry them to the game that we are all on the same page. We need to execute those plays in critical situations."

(on if he felt off) "Obviously, we had a couple of missed opportunities. Those hurt. You have to be able to hit those. I'm obviously not happy about it, but I will go back to work and get it corrected. I'll be ready next week."

(on the pressure of their defensive front) "They did good. There were certain times that we had a good pocket and we were able to get the ball down field a little bit. We knew coming in that it was going to be a tough front to block. They had a good pressure package. There are some things we can build on there for sure."

(on if him not playing in the preseason contributed to the slow start) "I don't think so. We receive a ton of reps in practice. We just need to carry it over from practice and being consistent coming out on Sundays."

(on working with the new offense) "It all works together. We have to be on the same page. We have to be good on the ball. Guys have to be in the right spots with the timing. It is something that we have to continue to work through and we will. We will be ready to go next week."

RUNNING BACK DERRICK HENRY

(on today's game) "They were the better team today. We didn't take advantage of the opportunities that we had. They did. All the credit goes to them. We have to be better."

(on working off the rust) "I felt pretty good. As far the offense, we just have to go out there and put some plays together. It is going to take all 11 of us to be on the same page. The playmakers need to make plays when they are there. We know that. We all hold each other accountable. We just have to be better. We will watch the film and be ready for next week."

(on if it feels weird being off the field on first down) "No, not at all. We have some playmakers who are good with the ball when it's in their hands. You give the guys the ball and they have some opportunities. I'm excited to see those guys in there making some plays. We are a team and it is going to take all of us."

(on if he's frustrated on the limited touches in the second half) "No, not at all. Coach (Vrabel) trusts what we do. We have some playmakers. We have guys who can do special things when they get the ball. Everybody needs to touch the ball. Its not all about me."

(on playing in this environment) "Whenever you are in the red zone, you have got to put plays together to get some points in the end zone to give ourselves a chance. We kept shooting ourselves

in the foot with penalties and things like that. We need to be better on third down as well. We need to put some explosive plays together in the run game and the pass game. I think we will watch the film and see what we need to do better and go out there and do it.”

(on what the Saints were doing better) “They were playing better defense. They got to the ball and put a hat on a hat. They did a great job and got the W.”

(on what the issues were in the red zone) “We try to put it back together and then we have a self-inflicted wound. Then, we are back 10 yards. We have to be efficient. We have to be more detailed. We have to have more discipline and string those plays together to get into the endzone.”

(on if he is concerned) “I’m not concerned at all. I thought we had opportunities to go score and we just need to do better as an offense. I’m not concerned at all. It’s just one game in week. We will see where we are at and what we need to work on. We’ll do those things throughout the week and come out next week and turn it around.”